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JASTROW'S TALMUDIC DICTIONARY.*

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New York City.

Max Mueller's familiar saying: "He who knows only one language knows none," holds good of no dialect as much as of the Aramæan. For no language, not even the English and Turkish, contains as large a store of foreign words, and many of these disguised and disfigured almost beyond recognition, as does the language spoken by the Jews in Palestine and Babylonia under the Roman and Parthian rule and used in Jewish literature down to the thirteenth century. The meaning of many of these foreign words having been frequently forgotten, we need not wonder at finding a large number of them in an utterly corrupt form which renders it quite difficult to the finest linguist to decipher them. Add to this the total lack of critical editions of either the Talmuds or the Midrashic literature.—In regard to the Targumim, Prof. De Lagarde and A. Berliner made at least a fair beginning.—Thus few realize some of the difficulties the writer of an Aramaic dictionary has to cope with. Aside, however, from these external disadvantages, the one great task of the lexicographer, which consists in the tracing of each word to its root and explaining its various uses in the different formations and ramifications, is much aggravated here where we have to deal with a language which is neither the natural growth of a national speech nor presented in the manner in which it was spoken by the people, but is the dialect of a school ever busy to coin its own terms and create its own laws of etymology. Quite frequently we find biblical expressions pressed into new meanings and molded into

* A DICTIONARY OF THE TARGUMIM, THE TALMUD BIBLE, AND THE MIDRASH LITERATURE. Compiled by Morris Jastrow, Sr., Ph. D. Part I. and II. London: *Truebner & Co.* New York: *Putnam & Sons.* 1886 and 1887.

new forms to serve as legal or ritualistic terms, and again when Roman or Persian life presented new conceptions or practices, we see their respective technical terms invested with Aramæan forms to secure their naturalization in Jewish law and Jewish circles.

Now, while Buxtorf won for himself immortal fame by his pioneer-work in this field, he failed particularly in the latter point. He was not familiar enough with the vast rabbinical literature and the spirit of talmudical casuistry to be able to clear up the puzzling problems of rabbinical terminology. In this respect, Prof. I. Levy's two dictionaries, the one on the Targumim and the other on the Talmud, represent an immense progress. The vast condition of this great talmudic scholar enabled him to achieve the herculean task of setting before the reader the entire stock of words contained in these works not only in an exhaustive but in a wonderfully clear and instructive manner, so as to furnish every German student with the means of penetrating into the hitherto hidden mysteries of talmudic lore. Prof. Levy does not merely give the words and their meanings, but, to the great benefit of the scholars, he presents also fair specimens of the various applications of each so as to offer a fair insight into the legal intricacies of the Halakha, the *practical*, and into the niceties of the Haggadah, the *homiletical* interpretation of the Bible. Still Prof. Levy is no linguist. Both his classical and his oriental, Syriac, Arabic and Persian, knowledge is extremely superficial. Hence his own etymological attempts at explaining rare words are, in most cases, without value. True, he endeavored to make up for this defect by obtaining the valuable contributions of Prof. Fleischer. But these are to a great extent criticisms, general or single, of the author's etymologies, and are far from covering the whole field.

It is not the place here to dwell on the merits or the defects of the great Hebrew work of Rev. Dr. A. Kohut, since three years resident of New York City, the *Arakh Competum*, the scholarly edition of the Talmudic Dictionary, by Nathan, of Rome, of the tenth century, almost indispensable to the student of talmudic literature. That which here concerns us most, the etymological explanations offered by Dr. Kohut, cannot claim undisputed credit, as they draw altogether too much on the Persian Dictionary, often presenting words of doubtful existence.

In undertaking to write an Aramæan Dictionary for the English student, Rev. Dr. Jastrow is far from claiming to supersede and outdo his predecessors in the field. By calling the work on its very title page a "compilation," he modestly declines originality as to plan and method. He obviously walks in the footsteps of Dr. Levy. To judge from the two parts that are before us, his intention is chiefly to furnish the student with a handier book, written in as concise a form as possible so as to facilitate its use. Viewed in this light, the undertaking certainly is a laudable one and deserves all possible encouragement. As Prof.

Levy's dictionary has done yeoman's work for a more thorough and a more general study of talmudical literature among German scholars, so will, we trust, Dr. Jastrow's, when once completed,—and we fervently wish and pray for his continued health to enable him to carry the work through to its successful end!—work as an incentive to English students to take up the study of a literature which is of such great importance to both the Jewish and the Christian scholar.

In one regard, Dr. Jastrow has even improved upon Prof. Levy. In careful study of Roman law he has frequently found opportunity of casting new light on rabbinical nomenclature, for which talmudists will bear him thanks. Not seldom he also offers plausible emendations of passages, the corrupt reading of which have filled the dictionary with the quaintest possible and impossible words. It would exceed the limits of a review, were I to enlarge on any of these. Suffice it to say that the author displays good judgment and independence of mind in this direction.

Quite different, however, must our verdict be when we are to judge the methods or arrangement and the etymological system upon which the work is based. The first rule in arranging the words must be *consistency*. No lexicographer has a right to have an article on p. 15 on **אָנרַת** = letter, and another on p. 45 on **אִנְרַתָּא**, one on **אִנְרִיא** p. 24, one on **אִנְרָא** p. 39, one on **אִנְרִיא** p. 41, and again another on **אִנְרָא** p. 46. Every one using a dictionary is supposed to know so much of grammar as to look for **אוֹכַל** and **אִיכּוֹל** under **אָכַל**, for **אוֹלְפֵן** under **אָלַף**, and for **אִנְס** under **אָנַס**, or for **בִּישׁ** under **בָּאֵשׁ**, etc., etc. Nor is this defect only a formal one. A just saying of the rabbis is: **כָּל הַמוֹסִיף גּוֹרַע** "He who does too much detracts from the whole." Single instances show that the author was himself misled. Take the root **אָנַר**. Here the author presents the following verbs: **אָנַר** I. = to gather, collect; **אָנַר** I. = to heap up; **אָנַר** II. to gird, arm; **אָנַר** II. = to hire, to employ, and **אָנַר** III. = rent, wages. This is followed by **אִנְרָא** = roof (from **אָנַר** II.) and **אִנְרָא** = letter (?) **אִנְרָא** from **נָנַר** to join. Now these Roman figures after Fuerst's style are simply misleading. **אָנַר** II. in the sense of girding, arming, does not exist except in late rabbinical mispronunciation! **אָנַר**, in Hebrew = gather, heap up, corresponds with the Aramæan **יָנַר** whence **יָנַר** = **אִינְרָא** = pile of stone and roof. Also the name of the "Roof-Demon" = **אִנְרָא** (see Levy s. v. **אִינְרָא**) is derived from the same root. The Aramæan **אָנַר** is hire, rent. All bilateral roots of the author must be discarded as based on theories which are to-day utterly exploded. These sometimes border on absurdity. So, for instance, **בָּאֵר** = to clear up, is derived from **בָּא בֹא** = come, or **בֹּר** = to lie waste, from **בָּה**, or **בָּאֵשׁ** = to be in a bad state, from **בָּא**.

The worst feature of the work, however, is that the author rides a hobby, being desirous of upsetting all established rules of Aramæan lexicography and replacing them by a theory of his own. He is bent upon Hebraizing most of those

words generally admitted to be of foreign origin, and in doing so he ignores the fundamental law of all etymological research. Things in daily use are always called by names by which they are generally known, not by such as each people chose to give them. And as most tools and merchandise as well as commercial practices come by the way of Greek or Roman, later on of Persian market places, one is in most cases nearer the truth when searching for foreign terminology in connection with foreign things. Against this well-nigh axiomatic truth the author persistently shuts his eye whenever he finds an opportunity of advancing a Hebrew root in support of his pet theory. Quite characteristic is his (also Levy's) derivation of **אָויר**, which is nothing else but the Greek *ἀήρ* = air, from **אָויר** = light, or of **אוכלוס**, **אוכלוז** and **אכליותא** the Greek *οχλος* = crowd (from which the verb **אָכַל** = to make noise, was derived) from **כלז** (?) = collegit (?); of **אונה**, **אוני** and **אוניתא** (obviously the Greek *ὠνή* = deed, title of possession, from **אונה**? possession?) because **און** signifies power, strength. Likewise is the Greek *εἴνη* = **אינא** = night-lodging, derived from **אנן** = **עון**, **חון**, etc., or such words as *ὄγκος* = **אונקי**, *ὄγκινος* = **אונקלי** = hook, derived from **אנק** = neck. That such a word of frequent occurrence as *κατάλλυσις* = market, fair, may in popular use be deformed into **עטליז** or **אטליז**, Dr. Jastrow finds less probable than that the Jew should have coined for it a term of his own out of the root **טלל** and given it so un-Semitic a form as is **Atlez** or **Itez**! Not even as common a word for inn as is *hospitium*, would be allowed to be accepted by the Jewish or Syrian traveler and pronounced **אושפיזא**. Not at all. A good Hebraist is to have coined that word out of the root **נשף** evening-breeze!! So is the word **אומיל** = the Greek *ζμίλη* = knife, traced to **זמל**, **מל**, **סמל**!!! or **אמצע** = *ἡμισυ* = half, between, to **מץ** — to press!!!

That, in order to easily pronounce a diphthong in the word, the Semite, as a rule, puts the Alef Prostheticon before it as prefix, the author cannot help recognizing in such words as **אסטאטינא** = stativa, **אסטבלא** = stabula, **אסטימכא** = stomachos, **אסטרטא** = strata, **אסטרטיוט** *στρατιώτης*, **אסכריא** (compare **אסרא** corrupt) = *σχεδια*, **אסכולי** = *σχόλη*. And yet he persists in espying an Ethrael noun in **אסנוגות**, **אסטכיוא** (from **סוג**, **סכי** = *στέγη*); in **אצטנגין** = **אסטליתא** = *στέλη* (from **סנגון**!) in **אצטלא** and **אסטליתא** = *στέλη* (from **טלל**!); in **אספלירדא** = *ψαλίδιον* = vault (from **פלר**!); in **אספלנית** = *σπληνίον* = plaster, (from **בלי** or **בלט**!); in **איסטבא**, **איסטווא** = *στόα* = portico (from **סבב**!). Can there be any doubt that **איסמטא** = alley = semita, or **איסתניס** = *ἀσθενής* = feeble; **אמברא** = store = emporium; **אמבטי** = *ἐμβάτη* = bath-tub? Or that **אפוכי** is = *ἀποχή* = receipt? Or that the usual term for the heretic, skeptic, or any irreverent person **אפיקורוס** is the Greek *Epicurus*, our epicurean? Dr. Jastrow denies it all. He coins words, creates roots *ad libitum*, in firm, determined opposition to all adopted rules. Not even such words as **בסיס** = *βάσις*, basis, and **בימא** = *βῆμα* = elevated stand, are allowed to rank

among the foreign elements. Of course, we cannot but regret the author's waste of time and labor on a theory which no Orientalist can declare otherwise than fallacious.

Another theory the author advances which does not seem to have any stronger foundation either. It is that the rabbis intentionally changed the form of certain names in order to lend them a bad flavor, by way of cacophemism, as he calls it. Thus he finds in **בִּי אֲבִידֵן**, a meeting-place for non-Jewish sects, a cacophemism for **בֵּית וְעָרָא** = meeting-house (**אֲבִידֵן** implying destruction!) But Wiesner in his scholien to Sabbath, p. 116, has convincingly shown that there existed two places where Christian and Parsees held their disputes, the one being at *Nicephorium* on the Euphrates, the other at *Bezabde* on the Tigris. These are called in the Talmud **בִּי אֲבִידֵן** and **בִּי נֶצְרִי**. (See Ritter X. 167, 253). That these scenes were quite anachronistically placed in the time of Emperor Hadrian, is not surprising to the student of talmudical tradition. Likewise does the author espy cacophemism in **אֵצְטְרִין**, **אֵצְטְרִיא**, **אֵצְטְרִי**, obviously the Greek *στάδιον*, as if it was purposely called place of ruins, from **צָרִי** or **צָרִי** and the like, whereas the corrupt forms are due to copyists and popular mispronunciations. The same is true of **בִּימוֹס** = *βωμός*, the Greek being probably derived from the Phœnician **בִּמָּה** = altar, sacred hill top. It has nothing to do with **בִּי מֵיֵאוֹס** = house of ugliness.*

A good explanation is given by the author (see the preface) of the word **אֲנֶרְוֹלְמַסִּיא** = *ἀνδροληψία* = "men-seizure;" of **אִיפּוֹפִי** as euphemism for **אֱלֹהֵי** cf. **יְכָה יוֹסִי אֶת יוֹסִי** where **יוֹסִי** stands for **יְהוָה** (Sanhedrin VIII., 6). But **אֶמוֹס** = model, is not = "אֶמָּאוֹס" nor as Levy has it = *μίμημα*—but a genuine formation of **אֶמוֹס אֶמוֹס** (cf. Delitzsch, *Prolegomena*, p. 108).

In reference to proper nouns, we notice some misleading remarks, if, e. g., **אוֹנֶקְלוֹס** is called the alleged translator of the Pentateuch into Chaldaic, often surnamed **הֲגֵר**—the proselyte often identified with Aquila, the alleged (*sic!*) author of a Greek translation of the Bible. The fact is generally admitted by scholars that the actual name of the Greek translator of the Bible, *Aquila*, the Proselyte, being made the subject of Babylonian legends under the harder form of **אוֹנֶקְלוֹס**, was later on transferred to the Chaldaic Targum which is the work, not of one translator, but of gradual growth.

Under **אֶסִּי** the author repeats the untenable derivation of the name given to Essenes from **אֶסִּיא** = physician. The double s after the e ought to convince any linguist that this etymology is worthless, aside from the fact that Essenes were a religious sect, not a class or profession. As Frankel has long ago made it probable, the name **צְנוּעִים** (and **חֲשָׁאִים**) for the humble ones, comes nearest

* Only very rarely such cacophemism is found in the Talmud, as in **עֵין גְּלִיִּין** = sinful scroll for *εὐαγγέλιον* = the New Testament, Sabbath, 116a, s. v. **אֵין**.

to the pronunciation Essenes (and Essæans). Likewise might the author s. v. **ביתוס** have mentioned that the Boethusians are not by far as old as the Sadducees, notwithstanding the talmudical tradition to that effect, but that the founder of the sect and the grandfather of Martha are probably identical!

ארמילוס, the Jewish Antichrist, has in spite of Levy and Graetz, nothing whatsoever to do with Romulus, but is, as I first singled out in a review of Prof. Levy's Targum Dictionary, in the Journal of the German Oriental Society in 1869, p. 693, the Persian *Aramainyus* or *Ahriman*, the antagonist of the (Persian) Saviour (Soschiosch) or Messiah.

אפיקטויזין = taking an emetic, I identified (eodem, p. 690) with *αποκαθαρσις*. Dr. Jastrow's suggestion to compare it with *ἀποκοτταβίζειν* = "to take an emetic before the meal," if such meaning of the word is proven, is more acceptable. We cannot, however, close our review without remarking that there is yet altogether too much conjecturing done in the field of talmudic lexicography, and unless the Syrian and Persian literature is thoroughly studied with a view to the archæology of the time, unless such works as those of Loew "Die Aramäische Pflanzennamen," of Fränkel "Die Aramäische Fremdwörter," and of Strack and Siegfried: "Lehrbuch d. Neuhebräischen Sprache" and Strack's "Joma," "Aboda Zara," have cleared the way for the talmudical scholar, all linguistic research will be but tentative and experimental. In the meantime each work is a welcome contribution, and so we part with the author, wishing him that his work shall grow in usefulness as he continues it in noble self-sacrifice.